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**Testimony on the Nominations for the Pardons and Paroles Board  
Judiciary Committee  
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The National Association of Social Workers, Connecticut chapter is here today not to comment on any specific nominee for the Pardons and Paroles Board but rather to inform the Judiciary Committee of the lack of sufficient forensic mental health expertise amongst the members of the Pardons and Paroles Board and to ask that this be taken into consideration when the next Board opening occurs.

This past fall staff of the Governor's Office contacted NASW/CT seeking recommendations of clinical social workers for openings on the Board of Pardons and Parole. At that time it was indicated that there was a need for the Board to have members with significant mental health expertise. Our office submitted four highly qualified candidates including a clinical social worker with many years of experience at Whiting Forensic as well as being a nationally recognized expert in forensic social work. Regretfully, not one of these four clinicians was appointed. We have expressed to the Governor our concerns and encouraged her office to appoint a forensic mental health clinician next time a Board opening occurs.

While we are disappointed in not having at least one of our highly qualified NASW members appointed, our greater concern is in the lost opportunity to have sufficient forensic mental health expertise on the Board. Whether it is a clinical social worker, psychologist or psychiatrist matters less to us than the more important issue of assuring that the Parole Board have individuals with significant mental health expertise, to evaluate the mental health issues of potential parolees. Given that the Department of Corrections incarceration facilities have a significant population of inmates with mental health problems it is imperative that the Parole Board have a sufficient number of members with expertise in mental health. While the opportunity to achieve that appears to have been lost in this round of nominations, by bringing our concern to the Members of the Judiciary Committee we hope that the next time an appointment comes before the Committee the Judiciary Committee will begin to rectify this problem.

In closing, we are not objecting to any particular nominee nor do we seek to block any nominee from approval by the Committee. We are simply asking that in the future, appointments provide for the kind of mental health expertise that the Pardons and Paroles Board needs and should have.